



CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION MEETING

July 10, 2019

6:00 P.M.

**Savannah Cultural Arts Center
201 Montgomery Street**

MEETING MINUTES

Present: *Commissioners:* Darren Bagley-Heath, Lisa Clark, Eddie Edenfield, Linda J. Evans, Andrea Hall-Houston, Patrick Kelsey, Jan Kramer, Alix Laincy, Kareem McMichael, Kristopher Monroe, Courtney Papy, Sue Ruby, Linda Wilder-Bryan

City Staff:

- Lissette Garcia Arrogante, Director, Cultural Resources
- Llana Samuel, Marketing Coordinator, Cultural Resources

Public:

- Kristina Vetter
- Brea Cali
- Pat Mooney

Absent: *Commissioners:* Barbara Essig, Janice James, Tanet Taharka-Myers, Anne Allen Westbrook, Debra Zumstein

I. Determination of Quorum/ Review of meeting minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Coco Papy, Chair.

Quorum was determined and the May meeting minutes were reviewed. Commissioner Kramer stated she did not attend the May meeting but was quoted in the meeting minutes. She also added that she wasn't added to the absent list and was absent. Chair Papy said she would make the correction. Commissioner Bagley-Heather noted that the date of Juneteenth was the 15th and not the 16th as noted on page four. Chair Papy reminded the commission that they can make a motion for the minutes whenever they feel comfortable doing so. Commissioner Laincy asked whether there was someone else who spoke instead of Commissioner Kramer as she is listed again on page four. A commissioner noted it was Sue Ruby. A motion to approve the minutes as

amended was made by Vice Chair Evans. Commissioner Edenfield seconded the motion and the vote was unanimously carried.

II. Announcements

Chair Papy announced that the meeting had a few visitors, including past chair Brea Cali, and gave each of them some time to introduce themselves. Ms. Papy reminded the commission that all of their meetings are public and the minutes are posted online. She also announced that any correspondence done throughout the City is subject to open records requests. Ms. Papy also announced that the commission is at mid-year and each member is allowed two excused absences. She reminded the commissioners that they also require six written evaluations, submitted online or emailed to herself, Ms. Evans or Ms. Arrogante.

Commissioner Edenfield asked whether things were going to pick back up after the summer and Commissioner Evans and Chair Papy responded that the fall will be busy.

Commissioner Evans reminded the commission that the reporting points listed on the agenda are the main things they would like mentioned during the Cultural Program Assessment and Reports. She also asked that commissioners assigned to report on an organization be allowed to speak first and then any other commissioners who attended an event may speak.

III. Cultural Program Assessment and Reports

Deep Center

Commissioner Ruby attended Deep's Young Author Project on May 13 at the Savannah Theater and thought it was fabulous. She reported that everything about the event was great.

Commissioner McMichael attended the Migration Stories event on June 8 at the Yamacraw performing arts center. He reported that there were about 100 people in the theater and that it wasn't filled to capacity. He also reported that the neighborhood revitalization and poverty reduction goals were met with this program. Mr. McMichael also stated that the audience was very engaged and the visuals were stunningly beautiful. He added that the youth's performances were compelling and that he did not have any weaknesses with the event. The City was recognized and the event was also well marketed.

Chair Papy also attended the Migration Stories event and reported that despite there being some audio issues at the beginning, the program was stunning overall.

Commissioner Clark attended the Young Author Project on May 13 and reported that the program was awesome and the room was filled to capacity. She noted that the families were excited and rooting for the kids and their friends. She also noticed that the kids volunteered with helping people find their seats and giving out surveys.

King Tisdell Cottage Foundation

Commissioner Kramer attended the last three events in April, May and June. She reported that the May 22 lecture on the African American military experience was a fascinating event. The speaker was wonderful however she noted that the room was set up for 50 seats but there were only 16 people in attendance. She also reported that the audio system had issues which was distracting and the lecture was started late. Ms. Kramer stated that the Q&A at the end was good and the age group of attendees was 20 and above with no children in attendance. She reported that the City was verbally recognized however she did not receive a personal invitation. Commissioner Ruby added that she did not received an invitation from King Tisdell either. Commissioner Kramer did mention that she received their monthly newsletter.

Commissioner Kramer also attended the June 26 lecture with Judge Tammy Stokes as the speaker. Ms. Kramer reported that the speaker spoke on three cases however there were only 12 attendees at the event and they were all 21 and older. The City was recognized and the lecture also started late as with the last one. She added that the lectures have very low attendance but the speakers and subjects are great.

Commissioner Evans attended the genealogy workshop on June 3 and noted it was an all day workshop. She received an invitation via Eventbrite on May 30 and printed her ticket to save her spot but her ticket was never requested at the event. She reported that there were 19 people at the beginning and a total of 24 as the day went on. Ms. Evans described that the event had four speakers who spoke about genealogy from difference perspectives and that they were excellent.

Commissioner Evans reported that the organizer for the event had some logistical issues. She noted that the event moved faster than planned. She also reported that this is the only project that the City has done advanced multi-year funding for. She noted that the organization stated the project would take a year to set up and that 2019 was supposed to be the implementation year for the program. Ms. Evans also reported that the June 3 event is the first event done for the program and a year and a half was spent setting up.

Ms. Evans also reported that most of the workshop was spent discussing two other projects the director is working on. She wasn't sure how those programs fit with the workshop. Overall, Ms. Evans reported that the organizer's heart is in the right place with the program however, too much energy is being spent on the other two projects. She added that there was a birthday party for Virginia Kaya during the genealogy workshop because her birthday was June 3, 1911. She stated that the packet for the event had some activities such as a crossword puzzle and other things that might have been issued to a middle schooler. Ms. Evans stated that the event was a disappointment.

Commissioner Evans stated that this was a significant investment made by the City for something that hasn't gotten off the ground yet. Commissioner Laincy stated that he was confused about the funding for King Tisdell.

Chair Papy clarified that the money given to the organization was for two specific programs, the lecture series and the genealogy research center. Commissioner Laincy clarified with Commissioner Evans that she felt that when she attended the genealogy event they were spending time discussing other events. Commissioner Evans stated that there was specific funding set aside for the genealogy program because it was seen as economic development and neighborhood revitalization. It was believed that this would be an income generator for the organization and people would have access to databases that they regularly wouldn't so they can research their ancestral history.

Commissioner Laincy stated that it seems like the organization needs to be more specific on how they are spending their money. Commissioner Evans noted that when the final report is submitted, they will be able to see where the money was spent. She added that what she saw in the center was four tables with plastic bins that included folders and papers. She also saw one computer for research, file cabinets, and bankers boxes labelled with countries. She concluded that it wasn't clear how people were going to use that space to do what they needed to do.

Commissioner Kramer asked whether the organization mentioned that a program would be purchased for genealogy research when they requested funding in 2017. Commissioner Evans responded that she doesn't recall it being itemized at the time.

Commissioner Monroe asked who the director at the organization is. Chair Papy responded that she doesn't believe they have a director, they have a board chair. Commissioner Evans added that Dr. Deborah Johnson-Simon is in charge of the genealogy program and was going to be the director at one point but was also on the board of directors. Some concern was expressed by the commission and Ms. Johnson-Simon left the board and is now a consultant. She also

reiterated that some questions do need to be asked about how the money is being spent.

Commissioner Edenfield asked whether there was a mid-year report in 2018.

Commissioner Evans stated that there was one submitted and some things were stated that things were moving along.

Commissioner Ruby asked what happens when there is a situation like this. Chair Papy said that was a good question to bring up and asked whether King Tisdell had submitted an application yet for 2020 funding. Ms. Arrogante replied that they had not. Chair Papy suggested that there be a meeting with the organization to bring up concerns in order to figure out a way to help the organization because they are doing important work.

Commissioner Ruby asked whether the organization had a board and Chair Papy stated that the board chair is Ron Christopher.

Commissioner Evans stated that the things the organization stated they were going to be getting in place were access to mortality schedules, census reports from 1850-1860 and other items. She noted that it was convincing that things were lined up.

Chair Papy suggested that during a meeting with the organization the rest of their 2019 schedule should be looked at.

Savannah Philharmonic

Commissioner Evans attended Philharmonic in the Streetz at the Edgemere-Sackville neighborhood park on May 19. She reported there were about 93 people in attendance and she's certain it picked up as the day went on. She reported that the people attending were neighborly and there were a lot of children, teens, adults and seniors. The City priority focused on is neighborhood revitalization. Ms. Evans also noted that the City was recognized and she received several emails about the event and saw advertising on television and in Savannah Morning News. She reported that there was a magic show, dance-off, prize giveaways and police officers present as community members.

Commissioner Evans noted that the vibe was nice and seating was limited. She saw a vocalist and a band was setting up as she was leaving.

Commissioner Wilder-Bryan also attended Philharmonic in the Streetz and reported that the community was really engaged and the event was well attended.

Telfair Museum of Art

Commissioner McMichael attended Juneteenth at the Jepson Center on June 8. He reported that the marketing was really good and he received information via email, social media, and television. The City was recognized on their printed materials and the auditorium was full. Mr. McMichael also noted that there were lots of people in the atrium and that there were a lot of kids aged 6-17 and lots of adults. Commissioner McMichael noted that surveys were handed out and the event met the neighborhood revitalization City goal. His critique was that he wonders if it's possible to be taken to another neighborhood in the future.

Chair Papy also attended the Juneteenth event and reported that it was a wonderful event.

Commissioner Evans reported that she was able to attend two summer outreach events with local youth. One program was on June 20 at the Tompkins community center and the other was at the Tatumville community center on July 10. Ms. Evans reported that there were about 9 kids at the Tompkins center and 14 kids at the Tatumville center.

Commissioner Evans noted that the kids were making cyanotype projects and that all of the work is tied into the Ansley West Rivers exhibition at the Jepson Center. The project is a four week process and the kids learned a lot of map lingo. Ms. Evans noted that the instructors are well trained and allow them to be creative. She also noted that the kids are engaged and curious and the Telfair should be commended on taking their programs out into the neighborhoods.

IV. Weave-A-Dream Committee Report

Commissioner Evans reported that three Weave-A-Dream events have taken place already and exploratory meetings with four different groups have happened. She reported that the Savannah Pride event just took place, the Daughters of Mary Magdalene also sponsored a Juneteenth event.

Commissioner Edenfield attended the Stonewall event by Savannah Pride and reported that the event was very well done, professionally organized and they did everything they said they'd do. He also stated that this lent itself to neighborhood revitalization, information pamphlets were everywhere and the event was an impressive use of funds.

Commissioner Bagley-Heath also attended the Stonewall event and thought it covered the celebration and the intellectual message as well. He reported that this event was their most accessible for any member of the community to attend and that the location was a fabulous idea.

Chair Papy stated that it was important to have something on Stonewall in Savannah and that this event was really joyous and educational. She stated that this was a best case scenario for Weave-A-Dream.

Commissioner Laincy noted that he was in New York for three weeks and attended the parade in New York. Chair Papy also noted that Savannah was the only city in the southern region below Virginia to do a Stonewall event.

Commissioner Wilder-Bryan attended the Stonewall event and also stated that it was well attended, a nice event, and felt like she was in Atlanta with the crowd size.

Commissioner Evans stated that it was the first proposal ever put together for the duo who submitted their grant request. Chair Papy stated that this is a success story the commissioner can brag about.

Commissioner Bagley-Heath attended the Juneteenth event by the Daughters of Mary Magdalene. He reported that one of their goals mentioned was youth involvement however, there was very little youth in attendance at the event. He also reported that Wells Park was alive and thriving on a Saturday afternoon and it was fabulous. He noted that this is where a collaboration with Telfair could've happened when it comes to Juneteenth.

Commissioner Evans stated that they liked the Juneteenth event because it wasn't downtown, it was in district 5 and engaged other neighborhoods.

Commissioner Wilder-Bryan stated that there were youth in attendance and performing on stage at the event. Commissioner Bagley-Heath stated that he would've liked to see those kids remain after performing.

Commissioner Evans announced that Camp Urban Hope also recently received Weave-A-Dream funding for their summer camp program. She added that she will double check their dates however, by not having a contracts coordinator they are missing out on event dates from organizations.

Commissioner Evans also asked both Weave-A-Dream committee members and non-members to attend the Weave-A-Dream events if possible.

Commissioner Evans stated that the WAD balance is estimated at \$32,000 and she will confirm the exact amount. Chair Papy stated that there is still a large budget so continue to encourage small organizations and artists to apply.

Commissioner Monroe asked whether Ms. Evans could say who the preliminary meetings were with. Commissioner Evans responded that they have had

meetings with Victorian Neighborhood Association and Savannah African Art Museum. Kaya Museum and Performance Initiatives have also requested for meetings.

V. Subcommittee Updates

The Youth Advisory subcommittee cancelled their meeting.

The City Priorities subcommittee reported no changes.

The Public Art subcommittee reported that they had a sit down with Lissette to move forward with the public art ordinance. Commissioner Monroe was able to pass on the subcommittee's recommendations for the ordinance and the MPC will look at them and give their expert opinion. An ordinance will be co-crafted and then sent to council for general approval. Afterward, two public meetings will be held.

VI. Chair Report

Chair Papy reported that the panel review will be on August 24 and there isn't a set time currently. A conflict of interest form will be sent out with an RSVP as well.

VII. Cultural Resources Director Report

Ms. Arrogante reported that the applications just opened up on Neighborly so applicants were nervous and a workshop was held on July 3 to help with the software. Building the mid-year reports in neighborly is currently happening and commissioners will be able to review 2020 applications via Neighborly also.

Ms. Arrogante announced that interviews for the cultural contracts coordinator position will be held next week and she is excited to fill the position. She also thanked Ms. Papy and Ms. Evans for their help with Weave-A-Dream and with the contracts position duties. Ms. Arrogante also stated that she met with Savannah Pride and was able to convince them to apply for a 2020 investment program grant.

VIII. General Discussion and New Business

Commissioner Kramer asked whether she could get a print out of what events are coming up. Chair Papy said they can hopefully get one. Ms. Samuel stated that upcoming contracted events are always listed on the website and if commissioners haven't seen anything it's because the organization hasn't sent their events to the department.

Commissioner Kelsey asked whether there was a conversation with Taffanye about the dual use of space for minors and adults and the curriculum-based use of the gallery space.

Chair Papy stated that she believed Mr. Kelsey met with Lissette about that. Ms. Arrogante said she has not spoken with Taffanye about that.

Commissioner Kelsey stated that he was going to speak to Taffanye about the use of the Center space with minors and non-minors in the building. Chair Papy said she will follow up on the minors conversation. She also added that Taffanye said that because the Center is a SPLOST building SCAD students will not be prioritized over citizens of Savannah for use of the Center. They want to make sure that folks who do not have the resources that SCAD has are able to use the building.

Commissioner Kelsey said that Chair Papy's comments made sense and that he will continue to address the issue as the students contributed heavily to the SPLOST fund. Chair Papy said she thinks Taffanye will be open to having a conversation about it. Commissioner Kelsey agreed and stated that it is election season. Chair Papy stated that Taffanye is not an elected official and Mr. Kelsey stated that her bosses are elected officials.

Commissioner Edenfield asked what happens with WAD items in the pipeline and should something merit further discussion is email the best communication route. Commissioner Evans stated that meetings will be required for complex applications however, the commission will not continue to hold applicants' hands through the process as it's competitive.

Chair Papy said the closest conversation they've had was with Urban Hope about continuously applying for the WAD program without moving up to the bigger grant program or finding sustainable funding.

Commissioner Laincy stated that since Georgia Southern merged with Armstrong, he thinks that they've become more exclusive and should they look at ways to be more inclusive in the process. Commissioner Bagley-Heath stated that the Latin Festival is an example of an inclusive organization who walked away from the WAD program. Commissioner Laincy stated that he just wanted to make the suggestion that for the future they look at being more inclusive.

Commissioner Evans added that the Asian Festival never had a core organizer for the event and that the money they have to invest is decreasing each year. She added that she looks at WAD as unspecified funding that can go to anything commissioners think is a promise. She stated that there are requirements for who can apply for funding and it can't be just anyone. Chair Papy stated that there is a systemic institutional challenge with Georgia Southern University's

merger and that she feels it's upon the commission to speak up and say they would welcome applications of those sorts. She said that they should go into those spaces and ask whether people have thought about applying for funding and encourage them to apply.

Commissioner Wilder-Bryan stated that she has been having a problem with correspondence via email about her evaluations. Commissioner Evans said she will speak with her via phone to figure out a solution.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting of the Commission will be held on November 13, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference room at the Savannah Cultural Arts Center.